

The Customs Journal.

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Fortnightly, 2d.

General Secretary's Notes.

Communications relative to this column should be addressed to the General Secretary, 13 Richardson St., Smithdown Road, Liverpool.

The following official correspondence has passed relative to the minimum for Sundays and holidays:-

455/19
Custom House, London.
June 4th, 1919.

Dear Sir,

In reply to your letter of the 24th ult., respecting the minimum overtime pay for Sunday attendance (including Public Holidays), I am to say that the only point discussed at the Conference was the raising of the minimum for one attendance from 3 to 4 hours. The question of raising the minimum for a second attendance as well as for the first did not occur to the Board's representatives, and was not mentioned by the Federation's. The effect of so doing would of course, be to pay two attendances of an hour apiece with an interval between them as highly as a single attendance of eight consecutive hours, which is prima facie excessive, and the Board therefore adopted the alternative interpretation of the agreement, viz., that it allowed a four hours minimum for the first attendance, and retained the former three hours minimum for the second.

It is, however, the fact that the wording of the temporary settlement was ambiguous on this point, and for this reason the Board consent to raising the minimum from 3 to 4 hours for the second attendance, as well as for the first so long as the settlement remains in force, but they do this solely because the wording was obscure, not on the merits of the case; and the whole question will have to be reconsidered in this light at the ultimate general revision.

Yours faithfully,

(Signed) J. P. BYRNE.

Gen. Sec. C. & E. Waterguard Federation.

Liverpool.
June 9th, 1919.

Honourable Sirs,

With reference to your Honours' communication of the 4th inst., our Executive Committee note that consent is given to raising the minimum for Sunday and Public Holiday attendance from three to four hours for the second attendance as well as the first, not on

the merits of the case, but because of obscurity in the wording of the Agreement.

We are desirous to maintain that the clear implication conveyed in the conversation on the subject between the Deputy Chairman and our representative on February 26th last was that subject to the usual limitations, the four hours minimum would apply equally to all attendances, i.e., to a possible third or fourth as well as to a first or second attendance on any one day, and we have again to request that this interpretation shall be applied to the point as from the 7th July last.

We feel bound to observe that our letter of the 24th ult. was based upon facts that do not square with the alternative interpretation mentioned in the first paragraph of the reply of the 4th inst. as having been adopted by your Honours.

In practice, paragraph 1 of the A.C.G.'s memorandum of the 17th ult. has been held to mean that two or more attendances aggregating not more than four hours, entitles an officer to a credit of four hours only. This has resulted, retrospectively, in officers being called upon to repay money paid to them under the provision (for three hours' minimum) of G.O. 26/1913.

We have before us a copy of a letter from the A.C.G.'s Office, dated 19/5/19, addressed to the Collector of Gloucester, which states specifically that where an officer attends twice he is to be given three hours as a minimum for each attendance.

Our Executive Committee desire us to add that they consider the four hours minimum as indicated in this letter to be a fair and reasonable settlement which they are prepared to defend should the occasion arise.

We are again desirous to respectfully request that decisions relative to G.O. 36/1919 should be officially communicated to this Federation.

We are, Honourable Sirs, Your Obedient Servants,

J. HALL,

President.

A. EDWARD HOWELL,
General Secretary.

The Honourable Commissioners
of H.M. Customs and Excise.

One thought occurs to the mind apropos of the Board's method of determining the effect of the four hours minimum, and it is that a great deal of trouble and more important still, a great deal of ill-feeling would have been avoided if the Board had, in the

first place, referred the point to the Federation for its views

Since this correspondence was opened another attempt to minimise the effect of the four hours' minimum has been disclosed in a memorandum from the A.C.G.'s Office, seeking to except tidal attendance from its operation by building watertight compartments round the four hours minimum and split attendance concessions.

Suitable action is being taken in this matter also.

In terms of cash, the effect of the Board's ruling probably does not amount, in the aggregate, to more than £100 per annum, if it reaches that figure but to the individual the difference is considerable. Psychologically, the effect is out of all proportion to the value of the cash consideration, and it is really amazing that the Board should risk alienating the goodwill of the staff by these paltry hair-splitting definitions, especially in the face of the Deputy Chairman's repeated assurances that the Board were anxious to foster a spirit of sympathy and goodwill.

Although no official intimation has yet been received, I am able to say that the agreement between the Treasury and the Civil Service Federation on the question of the new War Bonus, overtime rates will add 2d per hour to the normal rate of Preventive Men below 30s a week, and 3d per hour to that of Preventive Men above 30s, and to Preventive Officers, with rate and a-half for Sundays and Holidays. The negotiations have been difficult, as they were complicated by the widely varying rates of overtime in the Civil Service and the settlement is open to considerable criticism on account of its unequal effect: but such a result is inevitable under the existing broad and unscientific flat-rate overtime system.

A. E. HOWELL,
General Secretary.

Some Passing Thoughts.

(By "OWL.")

The elected officials of the Waterguard Associations have been working like Trojans for a very long time for the benefit of the whole Waterguard Service, and have accomplished great things, for which I am sure the whole Service is profoundly grateful. (I hope the few cave men who prefer to stay outside the Associations will also give thanks.)

Leaving for the moment the great things that matter, there is one minor suggestion which I would like to throw out for criticism, approval, or rejection. It is not intended that the suggestion should be allowed to detract in any way from

the great efforts now being made for the more important things, but I hope it may incidentally be given a passing thought by the powers that be.

Seeing that the Admiralty has marked its appreciation of the services rendered during the war by their officers, by conferring on them an outward and visible sign in the shape of adding a curl to the ring on the cuff in the case of Surgeons and Engineers and Paymasters, and in the case of the Warrant Officers by substituting gold lace rings in lieu of buttons, and thus raising their status, it occurred to me that perhaps our Board might be pleased to award some such sign of appreciation of the special and loyal services rendered during the period of the war by the Waterguard Officers.

I would therefore beg to suggest that the Preventive Men be allowed to wear a quarter-inch gold ring in lieu of buttons on the cuff of the sleeve, and the Preventive Officers a 9-16th inch gold ring and curl in lieu of the present 3/8 inch one. The Chief Preventive Officers' being, I think, sufficiently distinctive, would prefer to remain as at present.

The additional cost would, of course, be infinitesimal, whilst the pride with which all officers who are interested in the true welfare and honour of their department would wear such decorations should be sufficient to amply repay the Board for the honour conferred.

It would, I believe, be particularly gratifying to the Waterguard if we could succeed in gaining the approval and help of the Inspector-General for this purpose, as he knows only too well the value (not only practical, but moral) of these little things.

I understand that the Preventive Officers' "strawberry" is to be abolished. If so, let us have a substitute of laurel leaves round the crown badge, so that it may be made a badge worthy of the name.

Tuition.

Candidates for the Preventive Officers' Examination carefully prepared. Address—
"X.Y.," *Customs Journal*, c/o J. H. Cowell,
67 Goddard Avenue, Hull.